



CARE International Country overview

Bangladesh

Country Snapshot

- Population: 153 million
- Life expectancy at birth: 63.1 years
- Adult literacy rate: 47.5%
- Access to improved water source: 74%
- GDP per capita: US\$2,053
- Infant mortality rate: 54 per 1,000 live births
- Maternal mortality rate: 570 per 100,000 live births
- HIV prevalence: <0.1%

Source: UN Human Development Report 2007/2008

Program overview

CARE started its operations in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) in 1949. Today, CARE Bangladesh amplifies the voices of the poor and the marginalized in ways that influence public opinion, development practice, and policy at all levels by drawing on grassroots experience and relationships with civil society, government, and the private sector. CARE Bangladesh targets four of the poorest groups in Bangladesh in order to achieve sustainable impacts on their lives: socially, economically and politically marginalized women; rural poor who rank lowest in social, political and economic wellbeing; marginalized urban populations; and communities at risk from natural disasters and environmental change.

Empowerment of women and girls

The underlying causes of marginalization of women and girls in Bangladesh stem from existing patriarchal systems and structures; unequal gender relations; lack of access to and control over resources; and exploitation. All CARE Bangladesh projects have a strong focus on empowering women and girls. CARE works to reduce violence against women and reinforce the fulfillment of women's rights, particularly marginalized women such as sex workers and the rural poor. By working in partnership with aid agencies, community-based organizations, research institutions, universities, the private sector, and civil society groups, CARE improves food security for 400,000 of the country's poorest and most vulnerable households in remote areas, especially women and girls. The project seeks to strengthen livelihoods and accountability of service providers, improve health and nutrition, empower women, achieve preparedness for natural disasters, and improve local governance.

Economic empowerment and private sector partnerships

CARE coordinates with businesses, government and civil society to enable the poorest and most marginalized, especially women, to share in the benefits of economic growth in Bangladesh. As part of CARE Bangladesh's strategic plan, CARE will promote the economic empowerment of the poor over the

next five years by engaging in social processes that build solidarity with these communities, analyzing the underlying causes of extreme poverty, and building relationships with a wide variety of private sector leaders, businesses, and government agencies that provide regulatory frameworks and shape the business environment. Through these relationships, CARE will enable poor and marginalized communities to take advantage of existing market opportunities, create new opportunities, and participate more effectively in the economy as wage earners, producers, consumers, traders, and middlemen.

Civil society and pro-poor governance

CARE Bangladesh works to strengthen civil society, promote accountability and transparency, and empower marginalized communities and women to demand improved governance and recognition of their rights. Projects work in partnership with local aid agencies and local and regional government officials and policymakers, with specific goals including improved policies on urban poverty and reducing violence against women.

Water and sanitation

The ongoing project Environmental Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Supply in Urban Slums and Fringes aims to reduce mortality, morbidity, and malnutrition caused by diarrhea and waterborne diseases by promoting better hygiene practices, environmental sanitation and safe water supply among one million slum dwellers in 24 municipalities. CARE also works with municipalities to improve water and sanitation facilities in order to reduce rates of waterborne diseases and diarrhea, particularly among poor women and children.

Health and HIV/AIDS

CARE's work in the health sector aims to reduce maternal mortality rates through maternal, neonatal, and reproductive health initiatives. Program goals include improving the quality of and access to services through the country's Department of Family Planning; enabling Bangladeshi organizations to become self-sufficient in providing essential health services; and working in cooperation with private sector employers to improve the lives of factory workers. CARE's HIV/AIDS program focuses on reducing the risk, spread and impact of the pandemic among vulnerable populations. A key objective is to share learning from CARE's extensive field experience to influence Bangladesh's national HIV policies, resource allocation and programming.

Disaster risk reduction, emergency response and climate change

CARE provides immediate emergency supplies and relief when a disaster hits, and works with survivors in the long-term to help them rebuild. To reduce the impact of future disasters, CARE works with communities to implement mitigation and risk-reduction strategies, for example in the flood-prone areas of Sunamgonj district. CARE helps communities implement flood-risk reduction measures, protect crops and household assets, build capacity of community institutions and links with government and non-government service providers. CARE responded to Cyclone Sidr in 2007, providing emergency relief to more than 500,000 survivors.

Food security

CARE trains small-scale farmers in food-insecure areas in innovative agricultural techniques, and works with communities to develop solutions to the underlying causes (i.e. discrimination and social exclusion) of long-term food insecurity. CARE assists communities living in highly vulnerable geographic areas such as the wetlands of northeastern Bangladesh to build structures such as embankments that help protect agricultural crops from floods. CARE promotes improved nutritional practices, which effectively contribute to better utilization of food at household level. CARE also works with small-scale dairy farmers to incorporate them into the country's dairy supply chain, thus providing a source of steady income leading to better access to food.

Major donors

Academy for Educational Development (AED), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, European Commission, Gap Foundation, Government of Bangladesh, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Save the Children USA, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Timberland, UNICEF, U.S. Agency for International Development, and private donors.

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